

Crisis Care Enhancement Act

Challenge: As our nation continues to fight the opioid epidemic and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, mental illness has also reached epidemic levels.

- In a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll, 47% of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over the virus.
- 32% of adults who reported worsened mental health due the pandemic also report forgoing mental health treatment.

Additionally, emergency departments and the criminal justice system do not have the capacity—with existing resources and healthcare professional shortages—to address the needs of the rapidly growing number of individuals with behavioral health conditions. Several pre-COVID-19 statistics underscore these points.

- In 2017, 150,000 Americans died from alcohol or drug-induced fatalities and suicide. Nearly a third—more than 47,000—were suicides.
- Today 15% of men and 30% of women in county jails have severe mental illnesses.
- From 2016 to 2018, more than one-quarter of hospital emergency department “frequent users” in Illinois were patients with presenting or underlying behavioral health conditions.
- Use of crisis facilities and interventions saved hospital emergency departments an estimated \$37 million in avoided costs in Maricopa County, AZ in 2016 and saved the equivalent of 37 police officer full time equivalents (FTE).

The planned implementation of the new 988 suicide hotline will require that communities have the on-the-ground resources necessary to respond to mental health emergencies, the same way they have emergency response infrastructure to respond to 911 calls. Communities across the country need the resources to prepare and augment their behavioral health crisis systems.

Legislation: That is why Reps. Bustos and Fitzpatrick are introducing the Crisis Care Enhancement Act. This legislation would direct the states to utilize ten percent of their Mental Health Block Grant for crisis care services—once funding for the program is increased by ten percent nationally—allowing states to upgrade crisis care programs and strategies. Crisis care services include the following:

- **Crisis Call Centers** – Call centers that coordinate and connect patients and families to behavioral health services in real time.
- **Mobile Crisis Services** - 24/7 mobile crisis services travel to patients offering outreach, support and referrals to appropriate care when and where people are in crisis.
- **Crisis Stabilization Programs** – Stabilization programs offering acute or sub-acute care in a hospital or facility for individuals who need support and observation.

What is the Mental Health Block Grant? Administered by SAMHSA, the federal Mental Health Block Grant provides funds to States to support mental illness prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services. In Fiscal Year 2021, the program was funded at \$757.571 million, a five percent increase over FY 2020. The FY 21 funding bill also included a five percent set aside for crisis services. After the Crisis Care Enhancement Act becomes law, the ten percent crisis care set aside will go into effect once the Mental Health Block Grant receives at least \$794.8 million in funding. This is a ten percent increase over FY 2020 levels.